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ABBEY OF DUNGIVEN.

COUNTY OF LONDONDERRY.

The County of Londonderry possesses no ruin equal in interest and importance to the Abbey Church of Dungiven; nor is there, perhaps, in our whole island, an ecclesiastical remain, more remarkable for the romantic beauty and fitness of its situation. It is, indeed, hardly possible to imagine any thing more singularly wild and striking. "Seated upon a bold and projecting rock, 200 feet perpendicular above the river Roe, here every thing disposes to seriousness and meditation; the grandeur of the mountains, the ascending sound of the torrent beneath, the repose of the place, its seclusion from little things, and the awful monuments of mortality around it—it is a scene which contemplation must love, and devotion may claim as peculiarly her own." These are the words of the Rev. Mr. Ross, in his excellent statistical account of the parish in which these ruins are so interesting a feature—and we can ourselves bear testimony from observation, to the accuracy and truth of his poetical description.

A Nicholl, Esq *Chancel of the Abbey of Dungiven, County of Londonderry.* *Branston and Wright*

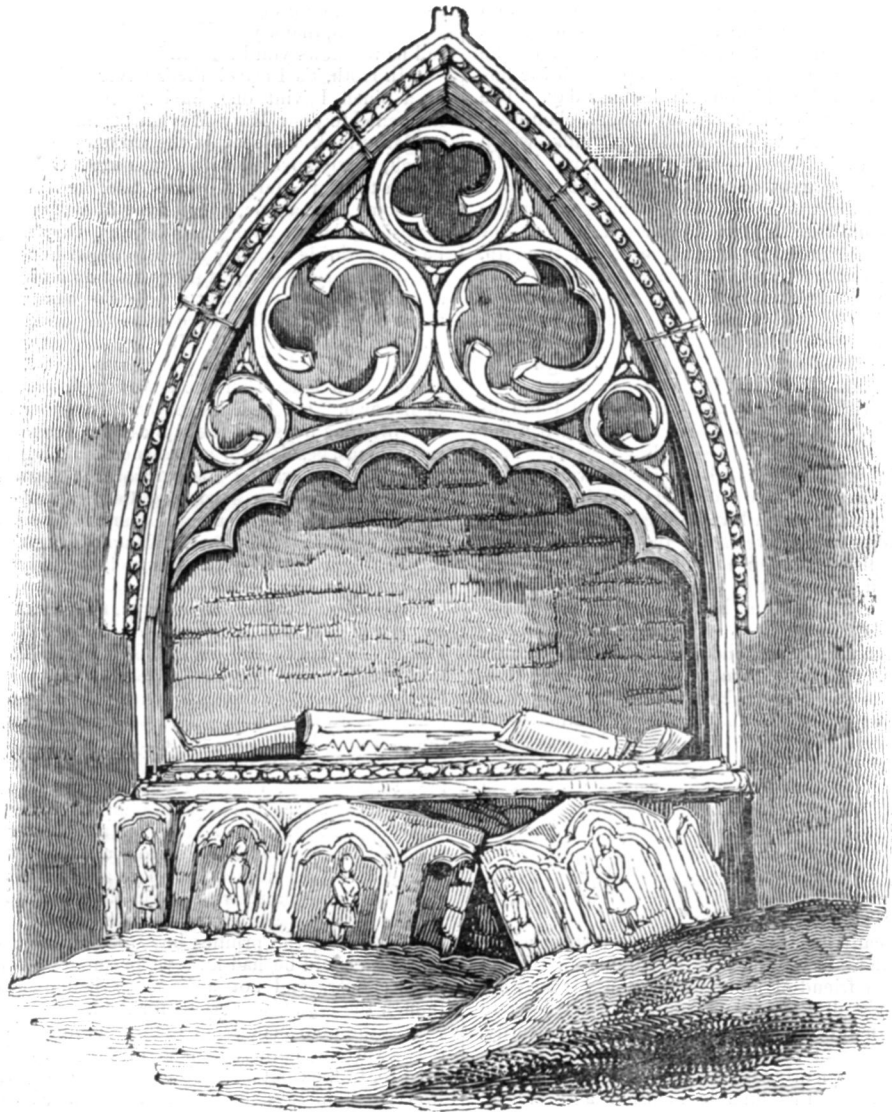
The Church of Dungiven is said to have been founded in the year 1100, by O'Cathan, Prince of Oireacht-ui-Chathain, who established here an Augustinian convent, and the simplicity of its form, the elegance of its masonry, and the general features of its architecture, correspond with that era. Like all the ancient Irish churches, erected prior to the twelfth century, it consists only of a nave and chancel, separated by a choir arch, or *arcus triumphalis*, the former of which is 40 feet long by 20 wide, and the latter, 22 feet by 18. This simple structure is however distinguished by a remarkable, and, as regards its situation, *unique* feature, namely, a belfry placed at the south angle of the west front; and which, though now much delapidated, not long since presented a very interesting variety of the Irish *Clocheach*, or round tower bell-house—the base of which was square, and formed a portion of the church. The whole structure, which is very much in the *Roman* style of that age, is chiefly remarkable for the beauty of its workmanship—the stones being all dressed and squared with the chissel, and fitted with evident care and precision The architectural ornaments are few and simple, the arches are semicircular, and the windows mere loops with sharp angular heads, apparently not intended to receive glass. In the nave or body of the church, however, there are larger windows in the pointed style of architecture, which are evidently additions of a subsequent age. Of the Priory, which was attached to the Church, only the foundations of some of the walls are now visible.

Few circumstances are preserved of the history of Dungiven, except the period of its foundation, and the names of some of its priors. Archdall acquaints us, on the authority of Sir J. Ware's MSS., that the church having been polluted by the effusion of Christian blood, was, with its cemetery, solemnly restored on the 16th of October, 1397, by the Archbishop of Armagh, at the entreaty of the Prior and Convent.

The etymology of the name of Dungiven, has been strangely mistaken both by Mr. Sampson and Mr. Ross, who supposed it to be correctly, "*Dun-aobhiun*, the pleasant hill"—but its true orthography is *Dun-geimhin*, pronounced Dun-gevin, which signifies, The Fort of Fetters or Bondage. For this correct etymology of the word, we

have the authority of the Four Masters; and the former existence of a fortress adjacent to the ecclesiastical buildings, is corroborated by the tradition of the country, which, as Mr. Ross acquaints us, states that the ruins of the ancient castle were used as materials for constructing the new one at the Bawn, erected in the adjacent town of Dungiven, in the seventeenth century.

Dungiven was the burying place of the sept of O'Cathan —a princely family, only second in dignity to the house of O'Neil, from which it had originally branched: the church and cemetery are filled with their graves. Their monuments, which are decorated usually with escutcheons, &c., in no mean style of sculpture, are however, with the exception of one, of little interest—it is an altar tomb, of much architectural beauty, situated on the south side of the chancel, and traditionally known as the monument of a chief of the O'Kane's, of great renown for his opposition to the inroads of the English, and hence called *Coo-cy-na-gall*, or Coo-ey of the foreigners. This hero is represented in armour, in the usual recumbent position, with one hand resting on his sword. On the front of the tomb are figures of six warriors, sculptured in relievo.



A. Nicholl, Esq. *Tomb of Coo-cy-na-gall, in Dungiven Church.* *Clayton.*

The age of this extraordinary monument can be accurately ascertained, though it has escaped the researches of Messrs. Sampson and Ross, as well as of all the other topographers by whom it has been hitherto noticed. The style of its architecture points it unequivocally to the close of the fourteenth century, and the name preserved by tradition as that of the distinguished chief for whom it was erected, is conspicuous in our national annals of that period. This name, which is properly written CU-MAIGHE, but pronounced Coo-ey, signifies a grey-hound of the plain. It was, and as Mr. Sampson states, is still common in the Kane family, "and in law matters it is put down Coo-ey, alias Quintin Kane." The Cumaighe or Coo-ey, who was distinguished by the cognomen of *na-gall*, appears in the pedigrees of the family as the tenth in descent from Cathan, the progenitor of the name, and thirteenth from Fergall, King of Ireland, who was killed in 722, and who was the common ancestor of the O'Kanes and O'Neils.

The Annals of the Four Masters record his capture by the English, at the harbour of Coleraine, in the year 1376, and that he was sent by them to Carrickfergus, to be imprisoned. He did not, however, die in the hands of his captors, as appears from the record of his death given in the same Annals, viz.:—

1385. "Cumaighe O'Kane, Lord of Oireacht-ui-Cathain, died at the pinnacle of wealth and celebrity."

This record shows that the tradition of Cumagal having been treacherously murdered near Limavady, as stated by Mr. Ross, (Par. Surv. p. 393,) is either without foundation, or relates to some other person.

Of the illustrious but unfortunate family of O'Kane, the reader will find some account in our 13th number, p. 103, and we propose treating of it at greater length on a future occasion. Its history is preserved by our annalists with curious exactness, for a period of nearly a thousand years!

P.